

Book Reviews

representations of the maternal body in contemporary art, specifically in the context of second and third wave feminism. Investigating the representation of motherhood and its practices in Cyberspace, Stadtman Tucker suggests that “third wave mothers may cultivate an online persona to restore their self-concept as cultural citizens and to relieve (or complain about) their sense of displacement” (201). Interestingly, she points out that “the most surprising parallel between second-wave feminists and third-wave mother bloggers is the accusation that some women are exploiting the strengths and vulnerabilities of the collective project to increase their personal status” (206).

The real strength of this collection is that it does not seek to define, classify, or explain; rather, it explores, through variety and contradiction, the messy but often affirming practices of motherhood in the third wave. An important third-wave feminist text, the book is a significant contribution to the study of mothering.

Ready: Why Women Are Embracing the New Later Motherhood

Elizabeth Gregory.
New York: Basic Books, 2007.

Reviewed by Elena Neiterman

Ready examines the phenomenon of later motherhood. Author Elizabeth Gregory analyzes the experiences of 113 American women who became first-time mothers after the age of 35, through either natural birth or adoption. Gregory, an older mother herself, considers the new later motherhood a positive phenomenon. Her book follows the personal stories of women who chose to postpone motherhood and considers the effects of that decision on their lives.

Although her book is based on the personal experiences of women, Gregory considers the wider social context of the phenomenon of later motherhood. For instance, Gregory argues that the availability of birth control and infertility treatments allows women to choose when they wish to start a family. Similarly, changing social attitudes toward career women, working mothers, older mothers, and single mothers influence women’s decisions to postpone pregnancy. Such trends contribute to the emergence of later motherhood: “over the past thirty years, the number of U.S. women who had their first child between the ages of 35 and 39 has *multiplied by ten* ... and there are now *thirteen times* as

many women giving birth to their first children in the 40 to 44 age range” (3, emphasis in original).

Despite differing circumstances that lead to the delay of motherhood, all women choose to become pregnant when they feel ready, both financially and psychologically, to have a child. Once they are ready, women enter family life through natural childbirth or adoption, with determination, commitment, and a great deal of joy.

As with other social phenomenon, later motherhood has positive and negative features. Gregory cites later mothers’ high levels of education, equal relationships with their partners, and financial independence. Also, since these women often enter motherhood at an advanced stage of their careers, they have the power to negotiate employment flexibility. Invariably, however, later mothers tend to have fewer children and feel less energetic. They also face the possibility of infertility, although reliable statistical data on this issue is not available.

Despite the many benefits of later motherhood, it is important to note that this path is usually chosen by women of socially privileged backgrounds. In fact, the majority of women giving birth still have to juggle mothering and poorly paid jobs; they experience financial insecurity and lack career opportunities. Later mothers, Gregory suggests, can effectively change this social reality by advocating for the rights of mothers of all ages, cultural backgrounds, and social status.

Don’t Bite Your Tongue: How to Foster Rewarding Relationships with Your Adult Children

Ruth Nemzoff.
New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

Reviewed by Rosie Rosenzweig

Ruth Nemzoff has written a long-needed primer on the fundamental relationship between mother and child. She has authored an easy-to-read book that begins where pediatrician Dr. Spock and his followers left off: parenting the adult child. Nemzoff advises parents to reassess their expectations of adult children (regarding college, career, marriage, and grandchildren), to reassess self-esteem garnered from the accomplishments of their offspring, and to examine the child resident in every parent as a result of his or her own childhood. She advises against biting one’s tongue with adult children. Instead, her book “reimagines the process of second-stage parenting as a time to get to know our children as adults, and to allow them to get to know us” (4).